

Message Text

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y-(DOWNGRADING INST TO READ XGDS-2)

FOR NEA SAUNDERS FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE
SUBJ: LEBANON: UNITY VS. PARTITION: COMMENTS BY BOUTROS

1. DURING APRIL 14 CONVERSATION WITH BOUTROS AT HIS HOME, AFTER I TOLD HIM OF DANY CHAMOUN'S COMMENTS ABOUT NEED TO FISH OR CUT BAIT ON PALESTINIAN QUESTION REPORTED OUR 2131, HE REFLECTED FOR FEW MINUTES AND THEN SAID HE UNDERSTOOD SAUDIS THOUGHT PARTITION OF LEBANON, GIVING SOUTH TO PALESTINIANS, MIGHT NOT BE BAD IDEA, AND JORDANIANS WERE PREPARED TO ACCEPT IT AS WELL. IT WOULD BE ONE WAY OF SOLVING PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. DID I THINK IT WOULD WORK? I SAID IDEA HAD BEEN ANATHEMA TO US, AND I HAD NOT EVEN BEEN PREPARED TO DISCUSS IT. ATTITUDE OF SAUDIS AND JORDANIANS MIGHT BE IMPORTANT, BUT ATTITUDES OF SYRIANS AND ISRAELIS WERE THE ONES THAT COUNTED. WHERE WOULD THEY DRAW THE LINE ON THE MAP?

2. BOUTROS SAID WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE WAS IMPORTANT, BUT EVEN THAT WAS A DETAIL. HE AGREED ABOUT IMPORTANCE ISRAELI AND SYRIAN ATTITUDES. ISRAELIS DID NOT CARE.

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SYRIANS KEPT SAYING PUBLICLY THAT THEY OPPOSED IDEA, BUT HAD THEY EVER INDICATED ANYTHING ELSE IN THEIR PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH US? I SAID, "NEVER." FURTHERMORE, I DOUBTED ISRAELIS WOULD WELCOME IDEA OF INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE ON THEIR NORTHERN FLANK.

3. BOUTROS EMPHASIZED THAT HE WAS SPEAKING PRIVATELY AND NOT

FOR THE RECORD AND JUST WANTED TO EXCHANGE IDEAS WITH ME, BUT SAID HE WAS BEGINNING TO REACH CONCLUSION PARTITION MIGHT BE ONLY WAY OUT OF LEBANESE DILEMA (UNDERSTAND HE MADE SIMILAR REMARKS TO SMALL GROUP OF JOURNALISTS ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO). BOTH HE AND SARKIS AGREED THAT THEY REALLY HAD NO COMEBACK TO CHAMOUN AND GEMAYEL WHEN THEY TALKED ABOUT PALESTINIAN PRESENCE, WHICH WAS IMPOSED ON LEBANESE. CHRISTIANS COULD NOT LIVE WITH IT. WHEN PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP TALKED ABOUT WORKING OUT ARRANGEMENT, THEY INTENDED GIVE UP NONE OF THEIR POSITIONS IN LEBANON, RATHER, THEY WANTED TO DISCUSS THEIR SHARE OF POLITICAL POWER IN THE COUNTRY. LEBANESE COULD NOT FIGHT THEM, BUT PERHAPS THEY COULD SEPARATE THEMSELVES FROM THEM.

4. HE COULD ASSURE ME THAT APRIL 20 PARLIAMENTARY SESSION TO DEBATE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE WOULD NOT TAKE PLACE. THE SUNNIS WOULD NOT ATTEND, AND THE GOL'S CURRENT STRATEGY WAS TO ADJOURN IT UNTIL AFTER THE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, SO THAT THE QUESTION COULD BE DEBATED IN A CALMER ATMOSPHERE. THE SUNNIS WERE GOING TO HAVE TO MAKE IT CLEAR SOMEHOW, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WERE FOR LEBANON, NOT FOR THE PALESTINIANS. IF THEY WERE UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO DO THIS, THE LIKELIHOOD OF PARTITION WOULD BE GREATLY ENHANCED. HE IMPLIED THAT GOL HOPED TO BE ABLE TO CONVINCE SUNNI LEADERSHIP TO DECLARE ITSELF.

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5. COMMENT. I SUSPECT BOUTROS IS EXPRESSING PRESIDENT'S VIEWS AS WELL AS HIS OWN. IDEA OF PARTITION IS GOING TO COME INCREASINGLY TO THE FORE. THERE IS COMMON CHRISTIAN FEELING THAT CONTINUATION OF PRESENT ARRANGEMENT IS IMPOSSIBLE AND THAT IF LEBANESE UNITY MUST BE SACRIFICED IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN ISLAND OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM, SO BE IT. IT IS OF COURSE DYNAMITE FOR IT TO BE SAID WE ARE EVEN DISCUSSING SUBJECT, WHICH RAISES A WHOLE HOST OF EXTREMELY COMPLEX PROBLEMS. WHAT WOULD BE THE BOUNDARIES OF THIS CHRISTIAN MINI-STATE? WHAT WOULD BE THE ATTITUDES OF OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES, AND THE VARIOUS PALESTINIAN GROUPS? WHAT HAPPENS TO THE LEBANESE-CHRISTIAN BORDER AREAS AND THE BEKAA? NEVERTHELESS, I THINK IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR US TO DO A STUDY OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF SOME SORT OF PARTITION ARRANGEMENT. WE WILL BE WORKING ON ONE FROM THIS END, AND I SUGGEST DEPARTMENT START THINKING ABOUT IT TOO. MY INITIAL REACTION IS THAT THE GEOGRAPHIC, ETHNIC AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ARE PROBABLY INSURMOUNTABLE. (ISRAL, FOR INSTANCE, WOULD WANT THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES, AND PROBABLY THE LITANI AS WELL). NEVERTHELESS, WE ARE GOING TO DUST OFF SOME OF THE IDEAS THAT HAVE BEEN FLOATED DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS AND TAKE A NEW LOOK AT THEM. PARKER

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